

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 IO-14 ISO-00 EURE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07

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USMISSION BERLIN

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

USMISSION GENEVA

AMCONSUL LENINGRAD BY POUCH

USMISSION NATO

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY VIENNA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

USIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MOSCOW 1304

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, UR

SUBJECT: JANUARY TRENDS

VIENNA FOR SUDEL MBFR

GENEVA FOR USDEL CSCE

1. SUMMARY: VISIONS OF THE COLLAPSE OF CAPITALISM
ARE BEGINNING TO DANCE IN SOVIET IDEOLOGISTS' HEADS,
AND THEY ARE CLEARLY PLANNING TO MAKE THE MOST OF THE
PROPAGANDA OPPORTUNITY POSED BY ECONOMIC CRISES IN THE
WEST. BUT COMMUNISTS ABROAD ARE WARNED NOT TO UPSET THE
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SOVIET APPLECARD IN EXPLOITING ANY "REVOLUTIONARY TRANS-

FORMATIONS" THAT MIGHT OCCUR. THE PURSUIT OF DETENTE STILL HAS PRIORITY, AND A PROPAGANDA OFFENSIVE MAY PROVIDE PROTECTIVE COVER FOR SOMEWHAT INCREASED CONTACTS WITH THE WEST. SOLZHENITSYN IS PUTTING THE REGIME TO A SEVERESTEST, HOWEVER, AND PANOV SHOWS HOW RELUCTANT IT IS TO TAKE EVEN MODEST STEPS. AND WHILE MOSCOW GLOATS OVER THE WEST'S ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES, IT TURNS OUT THAT BREZHNEV SHARPLY CRITICIZED HIS OWN ECONOMIC BUREAUCRACY AT LAST MONTH'S PLENUM. KOSYGIN'S STATUS SEEMS TO HAVE SLIPPED SOMEWHAT AND BREZHNEV, AFTER RUMORS OF HEALTH PROBLEMS IS SETTING OUT ON HIS POSTPONED CUBAN TRIP WHICH WILL AGAIN FOCUS HEAVY ATTENTION ON HIM. BOTH GROMYKO AND GRECHKO HAVE EMPHASIZED MILITARY PREPAREDNESS IN RECENT SPEECHES, PERHAPS WITH AN EYE ON CURRENT DISCUSSION OF U.S. MILITARY SPENDING AND WITH A VIEW TO SALT BARGAINING. SOVIETS HAVE DOWNPLAYED THE EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT AND PROBABLY SEE A BIGGER ROLE FOR THEMSELVES IN THE SECOND STAGE MEPC AT GENEVA. END SUMMARY.

2. VISIONS OF CRUMBLINGCAPITALISM. GLOATING OVER CAPITALISM'S DIFFICULTIES HAS NOW BEEN CARRIED A STEP FURTHER: MOSCOW HAS PROCLAIMED A "QUALITATIVE SHIFT" IN THE GENERAL CRISIS OF CAPITALISM AND AN "OVERALL DEEPENING" OF THE CRISIS. THIS WAS THE MAIN NEW THEME IN A PROGRAMMATIC SPEECH ON JANUARY 18 BY PONOMAREV (CC SECRETARYIN CHARGE OF RELATIONS WITH NON-RULING PARTIES) MARKING THE FIFIETH ANNIVERSARY OF LENIN'S DEATH (SUMMARY IN SEPTTEL).

3. READ IN FULL CONTEXT, PONOMAREV'S REMARKS DO NOT APPEAR TO REPRESENT A CRITICISM OF DETENTE POLICY NOR A STEP BACK FROM THAT POLICY; RATHER HE SEEMED TO BE ADDING TO THE IDEOLOGICAL JUSTIFICATION OF THE POLICY. PARTICULARLY NOTEWORTHY IS THE CAUTIONARY LECTURE APPENDED TO HIS COMMENT THAT THE SITUATION IN THE CAPITALIST WORLD OPENS THE WAY FOR "BASIC REVOLUTIONARY TRANSFORMATIONS" IN ONE COUNTRY OR ANOTHER: IN THIS SITUATION, COMMUNISTS MUST BE CAREFUL, AND REMEMBER THEIR RESPONSIBILITY TO THE INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT. IN PLAIN WORDS, THIS APPARENTLY

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MEANS THEY SHOULD NOT ENDANGER THE SOVIET UNION'S FOREIGN POLICY. THE LESSON HE URGES BE DRAWN FROM CHILE ILLUSTRATES HIS CAUTION: CHILE SHOWS THAT IT IS THE BOURGEOIS REACTIONARIES WHO BREAK LAWS AND USE TERROR; HE DOES NOT COUNSEL FIGHTING TERROR WITH FORCE.

4. PONOMAREV'S ENTHUSIASM IN DESCRIBING IN DETAIL THE CAPITALIST CRISIS, HOWEVER, IS CONSONANT WITH THE MORE

MILITANT PROPAGANDA LINE WE HAVE NOTED IN RECENT WEEKS. HIS REMARKS PROBABLY MEAN THAT THE CURRENT LINE IS NOT MERELY A TEMPORARY CYCLE BUT A LONG-TERM CAMPAIGN, BUILDING ON THE OPPORTUNITY PRESENTED BY ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES IN THE WEST TO SHOW THE SUPERIORITY OF SOCIALISM AND THE ADVANTAGE OF THE SOVIET POLICY OF DETENTE WHICH AVOIDS WAR WHILE LETTING CAPITALISM COLLAPSE FROM ITS OWN AILMENTS. SUCH A LINE WOULD ALSO BE AN ESSENTIAL PREREQUISITE FOR IMPLEMENTING THE POLICY, HINTED AT BY BREZHNEV IN ALMA ATA, OF GOING ON THE OFFENSIVE IN A COMPETITION WITH WESTERN IDEAS AND MOVING AWAY FROM UP-TIGHT VIGILANCE AGAINST THE PENETRATION OF WESTERN IDEAS INTO THE USSR. ALTHOUGH WE CONTINUE TO GET VAGUE SIGNALS ABOUT AN IMPENDING RELAXATION IN THE CSCE BASKET THREE CONTEXT (INCLUDING ASSERTIONS BY FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS THAT THEIR MINISTRY FAVORS ABOLITION OF TRAVEL CONTROLS), THE SOVIETS HAVE TAKEN NO RECENT CONCRETE STEPS WHICH WOULD LEND SUBSTANCE TO THESE SIGNALS. CONCEIVABLY THEY ARE AWAITING THE PROPER MOMENT IN TERMS OF CSCE NEGOTIATIONS, BUT EVEN IF THAT IS THE CASE THE EMBASSY IS SKEPTICAL THAT ANY CONCESSIONS MADE WILL LIVE UP TO THEIR ADVANCE BILLING.

5. SOLZHENITSYN. AMONG THE MANY OBSTACLES TO MOSCOW'S PURSUIT OF AN IMAGE OF SHINING SOCIALISM WINNING OUT OVER SORDID CAPITALISM ARE THE DISSIDENT INTELLECTUALS, PARTICULARLY THOSE WITH WORLD STANDING SUCH AS SAKHAROV AND SOLZHENITSYN. WHILE SAKHAROV'S SPELL IN THE LIMELIGHT LAST AUTUMN STEMMED LARGELY FROM HIS REACTION TO THE YAKIR-KRASIN TRIAL AND THE INTEMPERATE PRESS CAMPAIGN AGAINST HIM GENERATED BY THE REGIME, SOLZHENITSYN'S RELEASE IN PARIS OF THE FIRST TWO PARTS OF HIS DOCUMENTARY INDICTMENT OF STALINIST TERROR AND REPRESSION REPRESENTED A COUNTER-OFFENSIVE AGAINST THE KGB. BOTH CASES ILLUSTRATE THAT THE

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REGIME PREFERS TO MOVE SLOWLY AND CAREFULLY IN DEALING WITH CASES THAT GET INTO THE INTERNATIONAL LIMELIGHT. IN BOTH CASES THE PRINCIPALS ARE PUBLICLY ACCUSED OF PERPETRATING MISDEEDS THAT WOULD BRING THE REGIME'S JUDICIAL OR ADMINISTRATIVE WRATH DOWN HEAVILY ON THE HEADS OF LESSER FIGURES. IN BOTH CASES, PUBLIC CRITICISM REVEALS MUCH TO THE SOVIET MAN IN THE STREET THAT HE DID NOT PREVIOUSLY KNOW ABOUT THE VIEWS OF THE TWO MEN (IN THE PROCESS THE REGIME MAY BE SUCCEEDING IN MARSHALLING SOME ELEMENTS OF OPINION AGAINST THEM BY ACCUSING THEM OF OPPOSING DETENTE AND, IN SOLZHENITSYN'S CASE

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FOR ONE OR BOTH, DESPITE FOREIGN OPINION.

6. PANOV. OF ALL THE CASES BEING THROWN UP TO THE SOVIETS ABROAD, THEIR FAILURE TO RESOLVE THE CASE OF THE KIROV BALLET DANCER AND HIS WIFE IS ONE OF THE MOST INEXPLICABLE. EVEN HARD-LINE SOVIET PROPAGANDISTS HAVE TOLD US THEY CANNOT UNDERSTAND IT. THIS CASE MAY IN FACT ILLUSTRATE IN MICROCOSM HOW THE INSTINCTS OF SECURITY AUTHORITIES, LOCAL DEFENSIVENESS, AND THE PERVASIVE NATIONALISM AT ALL LEVELS HERE CONSPIRE TO FRUSTRATE EVEN MODEST COMPROMISES WHICH WOULD SO CLEARLY SERVE SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY INTERESTS.

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7. ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. IN SHARP CONTRAST TO CLAIMS OF FOREIGN SUCCESSES, BREZHNEV'S SPEECH AT THE DECEMBER PLENUM SEVERELY CRITICIZED THE DOMESTIC ECONOMIC

BUREAUCRACY FOR PLANNING DEFICIENCIES, LOW QUALITY OF GOODS, AND NONUSE OF NEW TECHNOLOGY. HE ALSO CONDEMNED "NARROW DEPARTMENTAL ATTITUDES" AND LOCALISM. THE SEVERITY OF BREZHNEV'S INDICTMENT CAN BE JUDGED BY THE DESCRIPTION OF THE PLENUM DEBATES GIVEN BY GROMYKO ON JANUARY 19 AND PUBLISHED IN THE YEREVAN PRESS. IN DISCUSSING SHORT-COMINGS, GROMYKO SAID THAT "A DIRECT, BOLSHEVIK-STYLE, PRINCIPLED EXCHANGE WAS HELD."

THE PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN FOR INCREASED LABOR PRODUCTIVITY HELD IN JANUARY BEARS OUT THE EMPHASIS PUT ON A JUMP IN LABOR EFFICIENCY VIA EXHORTATION AS A QUICK FIX FOR THE ECONOMIC SITUATION. SUGGESTIONS OF RAPID OR DRASTIC CHANGE IN AGRICULTURAL ORGANIZATION AND THE ECONOMIC BUREAUCRACY HAVE BEEN SOFTPEDALLED, AND RUMORS OF A PLENUM TO DISCUSS BRINGING THE SCIENTIFIC-TECHNICAL REVOLUTION TO BEAR ON THE ECONOMY, AND PERHAPS REFORMING THE ECONOMIC SYSTEM, HAVE NOT THUS FAR BEEN SUBSTANTIATED.

8. LEADERSHIP TRENDS. THE RITUAL ACCLAMATION OF BREZHNEV AS UNTITLED HEAD OF THE POLITBURO HAS BECOME UNIVERSAL IN THE PRESS SINCE THE DECEMBER PLENUM, AND THIS FORMULA IS NOW ROUTINELY ADOPTED IN FORUMS OF LESSER SIGNIFICANCE SUCH AS RAYON PARTY CONFERENCES AS WELL AS AT THE RECENT ROUND OF AWARD PRESENTATIONS BY POLITBURO MEMBERS. THE AWARD APPEARANCES BY POLITBURO MEMBERS, AS IN THE PAST, ALSO SERVE AS STATUS INDICATORS. CRITICISM OF THE ECONOMIC BUREAUCRACY PLUS KOSYGIN'S RATION OF ONE AWARD APPEARANCE COMPARED TO THREE FOR BREZHNEV AND TWO FOR PODGORNYY REINFORCE OTHER INDICATORS OF KOSYGIN'S RELATIVE POLITICAL SLIPPAGE. KOSYGIN FAILED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE JANUARY 23 TALKS WITH EGYPTIAN PRIME MINISTER FAROUK EL SISI, DESPITE HIS WARTIME OCTOBER VISIT TO CAIRO, WHICH APPARENTLY IS ANOTHER POOR SIGN FOR HIM.

9. IN ADDITION TO WHATEVER POLITICAL CONSIDERATION ARE INVOLVED IN THE NUMEROUS DELAYS OF BREZHNEV'S VISIT TO
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CUBA, A LOW-LEVEL HEALTH PROBLEM APPARENTLY COMPLICATED MATTERS. PODGORNYY REPORTEDLY TOLD THE JAPANESE AMBASSADOR IN EARLY JANUARY THAT BREZHNEV WAS NOT VERY WELL, AND A RUMOR OF AN APOPLETIC STROKE SWEEPED THROUGH THE MOSCOW PRESS CORPS IN MID-JANUARY. BREZHNEV'S APPEARANCE ON JANUARY 21, PLUS SCHEDULING OF THE CUBAN VISIT, SHOULD LAY SUCH STORIES TO REST FOR THE TIME BEING. HOWEVER, THE SUDDEN DEATH ON JANUARY 22 OF LITHUANIAN PARTY LEADER SNECHKUS AT THE AGE OF 72 SERVES AS A REMINDER OF THE EVER-PRESENT POSSIBILITY OF TOP-LEVEL CHANGES IN THE AGING POLITBURO. EDITORIAL TAMPERING WITH PHOTOGRAPHS IN SEVERAL MOSCOW NEWSPAPERS OF THE JANUARY 21 LEADERSHIP

LINEUP TITILLATED OBSERVERS BUT OFFERED NOTHING CONCLUSIVE.

10. MIDDLE EAST. SOVIETS HAVE CONTINUED TO SUPPORT PROGRESS AT GENEVA CONFERENCE, BUT, FINDING THEMSELVES ON THE SIDELINES, THEY HAVE MINIMIZED IMPORTANCE OF DISENGAGEMENT AND FOCUSED ON LONGER-RANGE SETTLEMENT IN WHICH THEIR ROLE AS CO-EQUAL IS RECOGNIZED. APPARENT SOVIET DISCOMFITURE AT U.S. ROLE MAY CAUSE THEM TO SEEK GREATER INVOLVEMENT IN FUTURE ME DEVELOPMENTS, INCLUDING THOSE OUTSIDE GENEVA. THUS SOVIETS WILL PUSH FOR SYRIAN AND PALESTINIAN INVOLVEMENT AT GENEVA. THEY MAY ALSO STRESS IMPORTANCE OF RAPID MOVEMENT TOWARD MEPC SECOND STAGE, WHERE THEY PROBABLY SEE GREATER OPPORTUNITIES TO EXERT THEIR INFLUENCE WITH ARABS.

11. SOVIET MILITARY PREPAREDNESS. THE EMPHASIS ON MILITARY PREPAREDNESS BY GRECHKO AND -- LESS EXPECTEDLY -- GROMYKO IN THEIR RECENT SPEECHES REFLECTS GROWING PUBLIC SOVIET ATTENTION TO DEFENSE EFFORTS. IN HIS SPEECH JANUARY 18 MARKING ANNIVERSARY OF LENIN'S DEATH, PONOMAREV GAVE THE THEME SOME IDEOLOGICAL TRIMMINGS, ASSERTING THAT "IMPERIALISM IS CONTINUING ITS MATERIAL PREPARATION."
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